

# MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM  
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE & PARTS OF

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE  
CAMPERDOWN HURLSTONE PARK NEWTOWN



## OUR NEXT MEETING

**Saturday 27 October 10.30 am**

**St Stephens Church, Church St, Newtown**  
*Sydney's Maritime Disasters: Greycliffe & Dunbar as told by Ken Horler & Chrys Meader*

Sydney Harbour is one of the busiest waterways in the world and on the whole our most famous body of seawater has a remarkable safety record. But on 3 November 1927, Sydney was stunned by the afternoon news that the ferry *Greycliffe*, which carried dozens of schoolchildren, had been run down by the steamer *Tahiti*. The 7,800 ton ship sliced through the smaller wooden craft off Bradley's Head cutting her in half. The ferry sank almost immediately in 50 feet of water with the loss of 42 lives. One survivor was **Ken Horler** OAM who will tell the story of the worst shipping disaster inside Sydney Harbour and its aftermath.



*Greycliffe dredged from bottom of Sydney Harbour*

That maritime tragedy was comparable in its tragic loss of life with the wrecking of the *Dunbar* outside the Heads 70 years earlier on the night of 20-21 August 1857. A stormy night, the ship's master mistook The Gap for the harbour entrance and all 122 passengers and crew, bar one, were drowned. The spot was so isolated that Sydney was unaware of the disaster until well into the next day. In one of the longest funeral processions ever seen in Sydney the remains of many victims were buried in Camperdown Cemetery. Local historian **Chrys Meader** will talk about the impact the tragedy had, who died, the sole survivor and his local connection, and the *Dunbar* in literature.

## MHS WEBSITE UP & RUNNING

Members (and non-members) can now check out our website - [marrickvilleheritagesoc.com.au](http://marrickvilleheritagesoc.com.au) which is linked from the RAHS site. Our thanks to Lisa Angus for designing the site and Angela Phippen who would like to receive feedback on 9280 2429.

## FUTURE BLEAK FOR DULWICH HIGH

Despite a concerted campaign and overwhelming opposition, it seems Dulwich High School (see August newsletter article) may have to close and amalgamate with Marrickville High. A community meeting at the school on 12 September with Education Department working party chairman Ron Hurley produced a range of persuasive arguments for retaining the school, though Mr Hurley made it clear the decision to amalgamate was firm and indicated it would be cheaper to renovate Marrickville than Dulwich. All other issues seem irrelevant – quality of education, excellence in service provision to multicultural community, strong teacher commitment, the Saturday school, value to business community, 117 year history, heritage-listed buildings.

Ironically with housing likely to replace the school that is closed, the 15-20 substantial housing developments in the Marrickville LGA either recently completed or still under way **must** increase the potential school population from feeder schools. Is the state government being short-sighted in its haste to sell off our state schools? Should not the government defer its decision at least until the 2001 census figures become available?

## CENTENARY OF FEDERATION EVENT

On Monday 12 November from 6 pm there will be a Centenary Council meeting in the Marrickville Council Archival Reference Centre (formerly Petersham Council Chambers) Petersham Town Hall. Displays and entertainment downstairs. Chrys Meader (9335 2160) would like to hear from anyone whose family, organisation or business was in the area in 1901. They will be recognised by a certificate.

## NEWTOWN FESTIVAL

Members are asked to donate goods to the MHS stall at the Newtown Festival on Sunday 11 November at Camperdown Memorial Rest Park. For collection or if you can help on stall ring Peter 9550 3809.

The Heritage Watch Committee is preparing the MHS submission to Council on the **Heritage Study Review**. If you have input contact Scott on 9559 5736.

**Marrickville Community History Group** is having an open meeting at the Herb Greedy Hall, Petersham Road, Marrickville on Saturday 13 October at 2 pm to discuss projects to explore social history and culture in our diverse local communities. Details George 9572 6819.

## OUR LAST MEETING BUS & TRUCK MUSEUM & TOUR OF MARRICKVILLE'S INDUSTRIAL SITES

A joint open day presented by MHS, Council's Heritage Promotions Committee and the Bus & Truck Museum was held on Saturday 22 September as part of History Week. 37 members and friends inspected the museum followed by a guided tour in a double-decker bus. The itinerary aimed to cover most of the important factory sites, some of which are still active. Firstly up Princes Highway at Tempe past the former Penfolds building, where participants told of the socialite Rada Penfold-Russell who refused to visit her husband here, and the Botany goods line where a light plane crashed into a goods train in 1952.

We saw the grand Olympic logo which stood 20 feet high gleaming in aluminium and red enamel above Martin Place 12 months ago now lying on its side on a mound of rubbish opposite Yelverton Street in Sydenham. Then to the demolition site at Nally's (known to the locals as Smelly's) Plastic factory which is being replaced with 8-storey high units overlooking Sydney Park. Down Unwins Bridge Road past Goodsells, Waugh & Josephsons and Taubmans to Sydenham where we stopped at the big stormwater retention basin. It is the virtual sink for the Marrickville valley and the site of what was a 120 acre lake in the big 1889 Cooks River flood. As a result this low lying part of Marrickville was turned over to factories though residents were at pains to point out they lived in Marrickville Heights!

Past Fowlers, Vicars, Shelleys and Sydney Steel and out to the flour mills on the Dulwich Hill-Darling Harbour railway goods line. Here we saw the Waratah Flour Mill silos, being converted into home units. Our return along Carrington Road took us past General Motors Holden and Tristar. There was some excitement when the Society's banner worked itself loose on Unwins Bridge Road with people on the top deck reliving memories of 20 years ago when a bus crashed through foliage.

After the tour there was a sausage sizzle and an afternoon public tour. Judging from comments in the visitor's book members were impressed with the museum, which is a valuable asset to our community. The Society thanks the drivers and museum staff John Ward, Roy Gould, Alan Travers, Frank Bugby and David Wilson; also Vivienne Larking from Marrickville Council and MHS members Peter Cousens, Robert Hutchinson, Richard Blair, Scott MacArthur and Mark Matheson for organising the day. Scott and Mark were also bus tour commentators.

**Mark Matheson**

The **Spring Trivia Answer** on the Council logo will appear in the November newsletter. More time to submit your coloured-in answers!

## MARRICKVILLE FESTIVAL: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

This year's Marrickville Festival was the most successful we have had. The first factor was the location. The stall was in Marrickville Road, between Silver Street and Garners Ave, on the shady side of the street. This was important because the day was bright and sunny. Also, we were away from the sound stages, which, while providing valuable entertainment, can make it difficult to hear and be heard.

Secondly, our stall was stocked with a variety of items: new and second-hand books, jams, preserves, sauces and bric-a-brac. Apart from the usual MHS book stock, all items were donated by members. Thanks to those who cooked, cleaned out their cupboards and/or carted boxes: Richard Blair, Ada Boes, Ted Green, Susan Hicks, Robyn Johnson, Diane McCarthy, Ellie McKenzie, Pat Mullen, Pippa Preston, Lucy Robinson, Ian & Margaret Rumsey, Margaret Sinclair, Gwenda Welsh.

Thirdly, thanks to members who worked on the stall: Lorraine Beach, Joan Bruce, David Cass, Robyn Johnson, Ellie McKenzie, Mary Phippen. We were asked many questions about buildings and streets in the Marrickville LGA and the work of the Society. This is the main reason we have stalls at festivals and it is gratifying to see increased interest in heritage issues. There was a sense that people wanted to enjoy themselves, needed to enjoy themselves. After all, the Festival was held on the 16th September and many people commented – after the week we'd had . . .

**Angela Phippen**



*Sydney's first fast food outlet was Lee Gordon's in Parramatta Road Petersham near the corner of Andreas Street. Jack Mulligan's 1961 photo featured in the recent State Library exhibition 'Weird & Wonderful Sydney 1953-73'. Member John Blattman recalls 'pigging out' on free thick shakes and burgers on opening night. Entrepreneur Gordon's venture was the forerunner to McDonald's which opened in 1971.*

## THE NAMING OF LISGAR HOMES

In the footnote to the write-up (November 1997 MHS newsletter) of the Society's talk given by Bronwyn Layton on the St Joseph's Investment & Building Society documents was a query about the origin of the name Lisgar, attached to Lisgar House in Carrington Street, Sydney, that society's headquarters, and to several childrens homes. The question again arose with the recent publication of Win Evans' *A Rejected Childhood* (see June 2001 newsletter) about her early life in Lisgar Children's Home in Marrickville in the 1920s.

An internet search revealed over 10,000 references to Lisgar, mostly in Canada. Further enquiries showed that Lord Lisgar (1807-1876) was Canada's second Governor-General (1868-72). Born in Bombay and son of a baronet he led a distinguished life as lawyer, MP for 24 years and Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Islands before succeeding Sir William Denison as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of New South Wales on 18 January 1861, a position he held till 1867.

Then known as Sir John Young, he was an active governor described by Sir Henry Parkes as "fully informed on political subjects, he was frank and modest in communicating to others the lessons of his experience". John Ward in the ADB (Volume 6, pp 455-457) says he and his wife "were active in social causes. He worked diligently for the Sydney Ragged Schools, the Society for the Relief of Destitute Children, the Sydney Female Refuge Society, the Female School of Industry and the House of the Good Shepherd".

The ADB article indicates he was an able and successful governor-general of Canada. In Dan O'Donnell's article *Lord Lisgar: From Governor of New South Wales to Governor-General of Canada* (RAHS Vol. 76, April 1991) which focuses mainly on his time in Canada, successive Canadian prime ministers agreed "in every respect Lord Lisgar has been an exemplary governor", though he is regarded as a somewhat "enigmatic" figure in the evolution of self government in Canada. Young was created Baron Lisgar of Lisgar and Bailieborough, County Cavan in 1870.

In the early 1870s Sydney police magistrate Captain DCF Scott established the Lisgar Training School for "rescuing female children . . . through a system of training for domestic service" (J Ramsland *Children of the Back Lanes* 1986, p 103). Initially the home was on Scott's property *Barcan Glen* in Liverpool Street, Paddington, before the institution relocated to Balmain then Harrison Street, Marrickville where it was run by the Deaconess Institution.

The Anglican Lisgar Trust ran various homes including some called *Lisgar*. The trust was later renamed Anglicare. In more recent times there was Lisgar House for Girls at Arncliffe which in 1988 relocated to Oatley. In 2000 it moved to Bonnet Bay where the girls' home facility is about to become a

casework agency. Lord Lisgar is also remembered in the aforementioned Lisgar House in Carrington Street and several Lisgar Streets throughout Sydney; also with Sir John Young Crescent and the Sir John Young Hotel in the city, and the NSW town of Young, previously called Lambing Flat. Lord Lisgar died without issue at Lisgar House, County Cavan in 1876.

Richard Blair

## LETTER FROM THE ARCHIVES

Former MHS member Howard Perry of Terrigal sent a most interesting letter of reminiscences to the Society in August 1985. Howard's parents John Perry and Rosa Morcom were married in St Stephen's Church Newtown in 1913 and Howard was born at 29 Church Street in 1915. He grew up in Farr Street Marrickville and went to Chapel Street School and Marrickville Junior Tech. With two friends Keith Gleeson and Jack Osborn he ran Saturday night dances for many years at various venues including St Georges Hall, Newtown. Keith's father Joe was bandleader of The Strollers which ran for years at Marrickville Town Hall. One extract from Howard's letter makes rather poignant reading:

"Naturally, apart from marriages and christenings, St Stephens was the venue for sadder occurrences. My mother had another sister named Grace, who in 1915 was 23 years old, and who delighted in early May to pram me all around Newtown to "show me off". Grace and her close friend, Iris Odell, religiously took Epsom Salts every Sunday morning, but on the 30th May 1915 on drinking the mixture down hurriedly it was discovered that she had mixed from a packet of white shoe cleaner instead of the Epsom Salts. The shoe cleaner apparently contained a very toxic poison as Grace died an agonising death. It was fortunate that Iris Odell only sipped her drink and spat it out, but was too late to warn Grace that something was wrong with the drink. It was at St Stephens that the Memorial Service was held for Grace."

## RAHS LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

This year's conference on Saturday 3 & Sunday 4 November *Dealing with the Past in the Future* will again be held at University of Sydney Faculty of Nursing, 88 Mallett Street, Camperdown. Speakers include Ken Cable, Anne-Maree Whitaker, Carol Liston, Phillip Black, Roslyn Burge, Rosemary Block, Richard Mackay. A guided tour of the grounds of Callan Park will be led by Peter Reynolds. Bookings RAHS 9247 8001.

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## CALENDAR OF MHS EVENTS

**SATURDAY 27 OCTOBER 10.30 am**

*Sydney's Maritime Disasters: Greycliffe & Dunbar*

**St Stephen's Anglican Church, Newtown**

Details on front page

**SATURDAY 24 NOVEMBER**

**Roy Lumby on 20th century architecture**

**SATURDAY 1 DECEMBER 6.30 pm**

**Annual Pot Luck Xmas Dinner**

## WAR MEMORIALS ANNUAL REPORT

It has been a quiet year in the locating and recording of war memorials and honour boards. It is, however, anticipated that the St Peters volume will be published within the next few months and the Marrickville volume will follow shortly thereafter.

There has been a reluctance to 'go to print' because of the fear that we have not found all of the memorials and honour boards that were created. A list was never kept when they were created so there is a fear that as soon as you publish, somebody will come forward with either information about another honour board or the honour board itself, and your publication will be deficient. In the end, that it is the nature of publication and if the act of publishing brings more to light then so be it.

A MHS member did bring to my attention that a B&B in Orange had purchased an honour board from an antique store. The board was believed to have come originally from Fort Street School. This piece of information was gleaned from a lifestyle magazine no less and on holiday to Orange I investigated this board. The owners are very proud of it. More work needs to be done to determine its place of origin.

The RAHS, in conjunction with the WEA, conducts a series of talks throughout the year and I was pleased to be asked to speak at one of these sessions on the War Memorials of the Marrickville Local Government Area.

**Angela Phippen** (presented at AGM)

**Note:** Angela also spoke on inner city war memorials at the recent South Sydney Heritage Society AGM.

## MEMORY & PEACE RESERVES

**Memory Reserve** is at the intersection of Unwins Bridge and Railway Roads, Sydenham. Contrary to popular belief this green space does not commemorate the virtually forced eviction of hundreds of residents and the ensuing demolition of numerous nearby houses in 1995-96 by the Commonwealth Government.

A memorial with an undated plaque says "Dedicated to the memory of the men and women who gave their lives for our country and in the cause of humanity and freedom 1914-1918 1939-1945 1950-1953". Adjacent is Historic Trail Plaque 16 (erected in 1988) marking the site of "Smyths Farm –

In 1799 Thomas Smyth was granted 470 acres at Bulanaming. This was the first large land grant in the present Sydenham, St Peters and Tempe area. He cultivated on his farm wheat, maize, barley, oats, beans and potatoes."

Another small park is on the corner of King and Alice Streets Newtown – the expanded and refurbished **Peace Reserve** which won Kristen Martin a design award last year. A plaque reveals it was so named in 1986 in recognition of the International Year of Peace. Whilst the concept is admirable, it would have to be one of the last places in Newtown to find calm, harmony and solitude.

**Richard Blair**

## REFLECTIONS ON LOUISA LAWSON

Wife, mother, postmistress, writer, newspaper proprietor, publisher, ardent feminist, Louisa Lawson, mother of Henry Lawson, was a woman living in a male-dominated era who fought for women's right to equality in work and in their personal lives.

On one occasion, taunted by a man who said women had never invented anything, Louisa pondered the matter for two years and came up with an invention for the postal service. She invented the leather strap and brass buckle system for sealing mailbags instead of the then-used wax and string and immediately patented the invention. It was lucky she did because ex MP, E. Nichol Murray, used her patent and she sued him. At court, she had no witnesses and Murray called 13 witnesses, all highly placed in government. She won the case but with only small damages awarded.

When starting her newspaper *The Dawn*, she employed only women and trained them to set the type and do all the work in the production of the paper amidst roars of rage and derision from male employees in the newspaper milieu. These men were violent in their opposition to women doing work which they regarded as a 'male only' trade. However Louisa Lawson had her way and continued to employ women in most of her ventures.

Louisa in her later years retired to an old stone cottage in Renwick Street Marrickville and is remembered in Marrickville heritage stories as a resident of other houses in the municipality. The Louisa Lawson Reserve in Marrickville stands as a lasting memorial (Source: Henry Lawson Museum, Gulgong).

**Pat Mullen**

Sunday 21 October 2.30 pm at Prescott Hall, Newington College: piano, vocal & horn recital featuring Jem Harding, Alexander Lewis & Adrian Hallam.

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